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Towards a Theory of Teachers Becoming Teacher Educators

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ABSTRACT

This research draws on the experiences of two new teacher educators to sketch the beginning of a theory accounting for the process of transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator. As these two educators negotiated the transition from the world of classroom teaching to that of the university-based teacher educator, attention was focused on the knowledge bases they employed in their decision-making, the institutional/contextual challenges and supports they experienced, and the extent to which their professional identities as teacher educators drew from their time spent in school classrooms. The result is a set of four broad categories that establish a framework for thinking about the move from teacher to teacher educator: shifting role identification, institutional and cultural context, frames of understanding and knowledge, and the practice arena. Twelve additional sub-categories are nested within these four "problematics of practice." Together these categories represent a starting point for further conversations about how teacher educators develop their identities and professional expertise.

INTRODUCTION

The career path of most university-based teacher educators begins in secondary and elementary school classrooms. At some point, the majority of practicing teacher educators were practicing teachers (RATE VII, 1994). With respect to formal role identification, in many cases the transition between these two worlds is remarkably abrupt and often takes place as soon as one leaves the world of the practicing teacher to enroll as a graduate student in a school of education. In an important sense then, teachers become teacher educators as soon as they accept teaching and supervisory positions in teacher education programs, often as a source of support for the duration of their graduate programs.

Yet becoming a teacher educator involves more than a job title. Developing an identity and practices in teacher education is best understood as a process of becoming. Though the work of teaching shares much in common with the work of teacher education, the two positions are significantly divergent in important ways. In all the current discussion and research on teacher education reform, how beginning teacher educators negotiate this early transition from classroom teaching to teacher education is a relatively unexamined question and a rarely told story (see Russell and Korthagen, 1995; Kremer-Hayon and Zuzovsky, 1995; Zeichner, 1995). Going further, there has been little effort put toward theorizing this crucially important step in the professional development of those who teach teachers.

In an attempt to fill this gap, this research draws on the experiences of two beginning teacher educators to sketch the beginning of a theory that helps us more fully understand what is involved in this early stage of becoming teacher educators. The study examined the experiences of two educators in the process of making the transition from classroom teacher to university-based teacher educator. Their experiences served as the site of exploration as we worked together to identify and name the aspects of their experience that were central to the process of moving from the world of classroom and to the world of university-based teacher educator. The research sought to determine the knowledge bases these initial teacher educators employed in their decision-making, the institutional/contextual challenges and supports they experienced, and the extent to which their professional identities as teacher educators drew from their time spent in school classrooms.

The empirically-grounded account of how they negotiated this transition was then used to conceptualize more broadly applicable categories associated with teachers becoming teacher educators. The story of their first year as teacher educators served as the basis for a model that helps organize thinking about how new teacher educators assume roles that are both similar to and different from those they left behind as classroom teachers. The aim of this research is a tentative substantive theory comprised of conceptual categories and hypotheses that illuminate this crucial induction period in the careers of many teacher educators. The resulting theoretical sketch is not offered as a definitive explanation of this phenomenon, but as a starting point for further conversations about how teacher educators develop their identities and professional expertise.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To my knowledge, there is no theory on the professional development of teacher educators that explains the transition I am investigating. Drawing on sociological literature concerning role theory (Biddle, 1979), this research was conducted under the assumption that there are behaviors, characteristics, and forms of thinking identifiable with those who occupy role positions as teacher educators. The work also assumes that these qualities are in some manner distinct from the behaviors, characteristics, and forms of thinking found among those occupying a conceptually and practically different role position— that of classroom teacher. Since we are not born with the natural possession of the roles we come to inhabit over the course of our lives, roles are acquired through a process of socialization (Biddle, 1979). A persistent, and clearly unresolved, question in socialization theory is the extent to which role socialization (i.e. the learning of roles) is the product of the subjective interpretation of individuals as they construct meaning about their social realities, and the extent to which extant social institutions structure and control the meanings we bring to the natural and social world (Layder, 1994). Cautiously accepting the position that humans both create social life as they are also influenced by existing social arrangements, this research takes a broad view of what might contribute to the process of new initiates coming into the role of teacher educator. The empirical inquiry upon which this theory-building attempt is based thus looked broadly at both the structural, institutional context

surrounding those making the transition from teacher to teacher educator, as well as the meanings and interpretations they brought to bear on the experience.

Given this broad view of *where* best to look for what might influence the adoption of a teacher educator role, the empirical study upon which this current theoretical sketch is derived also was predicated on assumptions about *how* best to look for such influences. In this case, the study assumes that one comes into one's role as a teacher educator in much the same way as other educators are socialized into their roles. Thus this research draws on teacher socialization literature (see Zeichner and Gore, ,1990) and assumes an interpretive approach to understanding the process of how individuals become participating members of a professional community. The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the active part people play in subjectively mediating and creating meaning within social situations. In this case, teachers moving from classroom to teacher education settings are understood to have significant agency in constructing their role identification and practices among complex and variable settings. In this case, an interpretive approach meant that analysis was focused on the understandings and beliefs brought to bear on the experiences of the two study participants who had left behind the world of classroom teaching, and who were negotiating their induction into teacher education. The interpretive approach upon which this research was based does not ignore the structural and objective realities that might influence the development of new teacher educators. Rather, such macro forces are examined through the ways in which these beginning teacher educators make sense of them.

Central to the interpretive stance taken by this research is Dewey's (1933) notion that professional activity proceeds along a continuum from routine to reflective. In part, I assumed there is a code of practice that beginning teacher educators would internalize uncritically and unreflectively, or in a routine manner. At the same time, I also assumed that there are what Munby and Russell (1990) refer to as "puzzles of practice" that lead to reflective examination. Borrowing from Schon (1983, 1987), such reflection takes place both in-action (within the moment of practice) and on-action (after the moment has passed). This research attempts to honor the perspectives of those involved in making the transition from teacher to teacher educator. I looked at what was routine and what prompted reflection. The goal was to understand how the

study participants constructed their identities and practices as teacher educators with respect to their existing beliefs, expectations, desires, perceived needs, biography, and the institutional/cultural/social factors they encounter during this period of role transition.

METHODOLOGY

As an attempt to build a theory of teachers becoming teachers, this research drew directly from an empirical investigation of two educators' experiences in their first year of practice as teacher educators. Investigating their experiences called for a qualitative form of inquiry that centered on the experiences of teachers moving from the role of classroom teacher to that of teacher educator. As well, the theoretical framework suggested the value of their deep involvement in interpreting the process of moving from classroom teacher to university-based teacher educator. In effect, they needed to become researchers of their own experience. The result then is a hybrid methodology that combines two complementary quality research approaches to guide the investigation: case study and self-study.

In the absence of any established theory to account for the initial development of teacher educators, qualitative case study is especially well suited for this investigation. Case studies provide particularistic and descriptive accounts of experiences, and point toward working theories about the broader class of phenomena to which that experience belongs (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I, a university-based teacher educator and researcher, worked with two former classroom teachers to investigate their initial teacher education experiences as graduate students in a research-oriented school of education. Karl entered a Foundations and Policy program as a former social studies teacher with ten years of secondary classroom experience. Jason began a program in Teacher Education as a six-year veteran of secondary English classrooms. Their combined experiences provided the "bounded system" for the case study (Stake, 1995). Tools of qualitative inquiry were turned to this system to locate themes, patterns, and processes that collectively might serve as the basis of a heuristic to advance our thinking about the initial professional socialization of teacher educators.

The case study unfolded as I drew on a wide range of interconnected and interpretive methods to collect a broad array of information drawn from multiple sources. I assembled separate and independent data sets for Karl and Jason over the course of the 1999-2000 academic

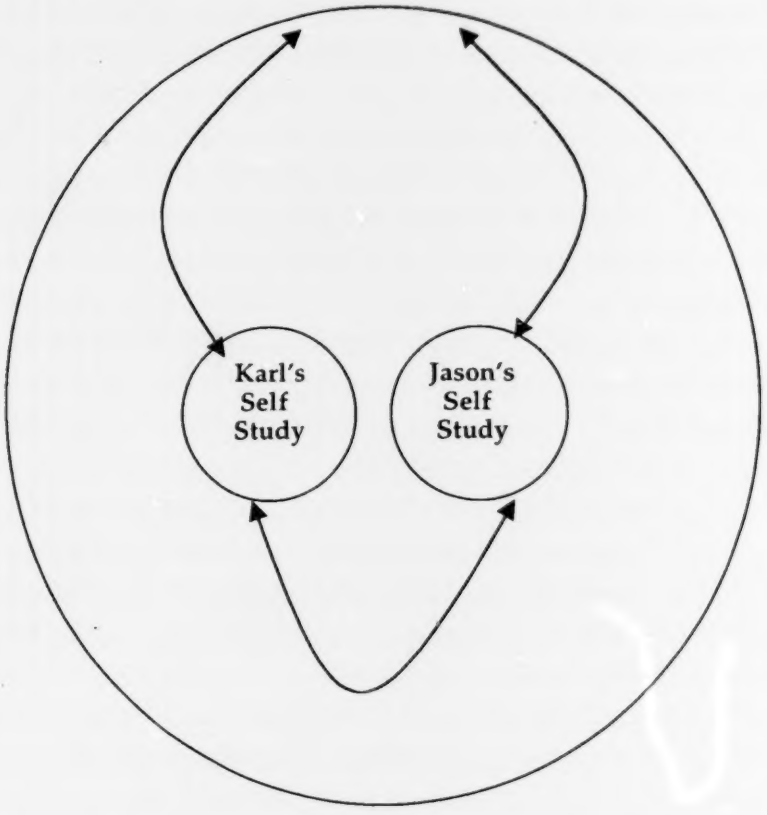
year, when both gained their initial experience as university-based teacher educators. These data sets were comprised of several types of data, including a series of semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990), field observations of Jason and Karl working as teacher educators (e.g. conducting student teacher observations, leading return-to-campus seminars, and participating in periodic University Supervisor meetings), and artifacts of their practice-- such as assignments, observation write-ups.

Drawing on an emerging self-study research tradition in teacher education (Loughran & Russell, 1997; Russell & Korthagen, 1995; Zeichner, 1999), Karl and Jason supplemented these data sets as researchers of their own practice. Both were aware of, and reflective on, the aims of this research when they began their tenures as new teacher educators. Their own reflections on their work influenced the topics explored in the semi-structured interview. Independent of these, both kept weekly reflective journals that initially centered on the general question of their transition from teacher to teacher educator. These journals became more focused on particular themes and questions that arose from both their involvement as co-researchers in the project *and* as individual teacher educators investigating their own practice. The resulting primary data sets were considered complete at the end of the final semester under study, after Karl and Jason had completed their duties as University Supervisors.

The reciprocal arrangement between the case study and self-study dimensions of the study led to an important reflexivity that bears highlighting. In this instance, the formal and systematic inquiry conducted by Jason and Karl into their own progress proved to be something more than just another data source to be fed into the larger case study. Rather, the understandings revealed by both self-studies shaped the direction and nature of the case study. In a similar fashion, their participation in the case study influenced the direction and nature of their self studies. Both research approaches—case and self-study—combined to form a hybrid methodology that enabled a broad view of the phenomenon under study that simultaneously incorporated the developing perspectives and knowledge of Karl and Jason. Table One represents the form of the collaborative cooperative inquiry shaped by the combination of case study and the self-studies of the experiences Karl and Jason had as the negotiated their new roles as practicing teacher educators.

TABLE ONE Qualitative Methodology: Collaborative Cooperative Inquiry

Todd's Case Study of Karl and Jason



Blending methods of case-study research with those used in self-study of teacher education practices yielded a rich and holistic account of this transition year. I worked with Jason and Karl to analyze their data sets. Conceptual categories, and the relationships among these, were inductively derived via repeated reviews completed by the three of us as we looked for patterns, themes, and problems they encountered as they learned their way as new teacher educators. These conceptual categories became the basis for the theory sketched out in this paper.

FINDINGS

This study yields several important categories that represent common themes and concerns experienced by Karl and Jason as they negotiated their move from the classroom to the university teacher education setting. Taken together, these central themes are organized to highlight key "problematics of practice" that beginning teacher educators may experience as they move from their positions as classroom teachers into university settings. These problematics of practice were experienced by both Karl and Jason, though often in different ways and to different effect. They highlight key issues faced by two secondary teachers who entered the ranks of teacher educators via graduate teaching assistantships. Taken together, these categories represent a contribution towards the development of a theory that accounts for teachers becoming teacher educators. Table Two represents the elements of this theory.

TABLE TWO Problematics of Practice: Towards a theory of teachers becoming teacher educators.

Central Category	Sub-Category
Shifting Role Identification	▪ Seeking confidence ▪ Integrating distinct, related identities
Institutional and Cultural Context	▪ School v University Sites: commonalities and differences ▪ Institutional supports at a research university ▪ Institutional expectations at a research university
Frames of Understanding and Knowledge	▪ Searching for credibility ▪ Knowledge from former (classroom) lives ▪ New bodies of "expertise" ▪ Knowledge from doing (and reflecting)
The Practice Arena	▪ Felt needs/challenges of practice ▪ Levels of advocacy ▪ Teacher educators as models

In the remainder of this section, I further explain the categories outlined in Table Two. In an effort to mark out conceptual spaces that might serve as a heuristic for further theory-building efforts, the concern here is more to highlight the meaning of these categories than it is to substantiate their derivation. For a more comprehensive account of the empirical basis of these categories, see Dinkelman, Margolis, and Sikkenga (2001).

Shifting Role Identification

The first category of this theoretical sketch—shifting role identification- suggests that the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator is an uneven and extended process of change leading to role identification that draws on two sometimes complementary, sometimes competing role positions. For Karl and Jason, becoming teacher educators was not an abrupt and clean break from their past identities as classroom teachers. They did not simply cast off one former role for a new one. They retained elements of the former as they struggled to construct the latter. They engaged in ongoing efforts to construct new identities as teacher educators that incorporated a good deal of the ways of thinking, acting, and being that characterized their former lives as classroom teachers. The process was not a simple exchange of their classroom teacher identities for a new teacher educator identity. Throughout the duration of the study, Karl and Jason sought ways to integrate these two identities. The extent to which this new role identification indicated an independence from, and remained in conflict with, their previous identity as classroom teachers was an important dimension of their experiences in negotiating the transition from classroom teacher to university-based teacher educator.

Seeking confidence

One dynamic in which the process of shifting role identification played itself out was in the year-long struggle to locate a sense confidence about making instructional decisions in the new and unique context of teacher education. Karl and Jason both felt comfortable and competent in the conducting their work as classroom teachers. Their years of experience as secondary teachers left them reasonably self-assured about the decisions they made in working with their students. The new world of university-based teacher education, however, caused them to repeatedly question whether their interactions with student and cooperating teachers were grounded in a

model of best practice. At times they felt secure in the credibility their identities as classroom teachers seemed to afford them. Yet, often the problems they encountered as teacher educators did not fit neatly with the patterns of practice they carried over from their teaching days. In these moments, they experienced doubt and disequilibrium. In dealing with these moments, in looking for confidence, they were made aware of the ways in which working with new teachers often posed situations that had no direct parallels to their work with secondary students, even as they were ever aware that both activities, at an essential level, were fundamentally about teaching. As they fashioned new responses to unique teaching problems, they added to the sense of efficacy they maintained in their abilities as a different kind of teacher than they had been before. Thus the search for confidence facilitated the process of shifting role identification.

Integrating distinct, related identities

Another dynamic at work in the process of shifting role identities relates to a developing awareness of the ways in which the work of teacher education sometimes mirrors and sometimes sets itself apart from the work that one does as a classroom teacher. If the experiences of Jason and Karl hold for other beginning teacher educators, the role transition involves working out how these similarities and dissimilarities can be integrated in a sort of compromise identity that marks space for ways of acting and thinking in both worlds. This compromise is not easily accomplished in quick fashion. Jason and Karl both ended their first years having made some progress in becoming comfortable with the dual citizenship they now held in the university and in public schools, but they experienced recurring tension throughout. For example, in conducting field supervision they often found themselves enacting dual identities, almost at the same time. With the cooperating teacher, the desire to enlist the support of the cooperating teacher meant they often found themselves laying claim to their collegial membership in the ranks of classroom teachers. As they sought to project an "I'm one of you" identity to the cooperating teacher, the presence and voice of the student teacher would draw into sharp relief that they had other, if not competing, then at least distinct, obligations that did not fit with the role profile of a teacher. At this early stage in their development as teacher educators, this tension clearly did not cause lead to the assumption of a transformed and unique set of expectations that captured their new roles as teacher educators. Instead, the result was

something of an odd mixture that enabled them to negotiate both worlds effectively, even if a little awkwardly at times.

Institutional and Cultural Context

A second terrain of experience central to induction of teacher educators is the institutional and cultural context in which their new roles are played out. As used here, institutional context refers to both the explicit and implicit set of norms, mores, messages, supports and requirements established by the university's graduate program in Education and teacher education program. Clearly, there are myriad variations in the context established at different teacher education institutions (e.g type of college/university, region of the country, relationship of schools of education to communities of practice, guiding assumptions about best practice in teacher education, etc.). In this case, Karl began in a Master's program and later stayed on for Doctoral work in Education Policy, and Jason began in the Doctoral program in Teacher Education. Both were significantly influenced by the institutional relationships and arrangements that structured their programs. Being at a "Category I Research University" also supplied a specific set of challenges and opportunities.

Drawing attention to the institutional context is important for the ways in which the particular university setting shaped how Karl and Jason experienced their role transitions. Again, an important assumption embedded in the interpretive theoretical framework of this work is to acknowledge the power of external structures to shape the actions and beliefs of individuals. At the same time, the focus is on the agency and interpretations individual actors bring to bear on making sense of these structures. As the institutional context became a major theme for Karl and Jason, the following sub-themes emerged: (1) The university context compared to the K-12 context; (2) Supports offered to new teacher educators at the university; (3) University requirements and expectations of new teacher educators.

Schools and the university

An obvious common feature shared by the roles teachers assume in both schools and the university is the act of teaching. Yet the differences between these two settings proved striking to Karl and Jason as they moved from their classroom teaching positions to the university. In

developing their identities and practices as teacher educators, Karl and Jason struggled to understand and organize these differences. The process of making sense of these differences was an ongoing project across the year and was an important aspect of their development as teacher educators. This research suggests that the process of moving from school classroom to university teacher education involves making sense of those contextual features shared by both worlds and those that are different.

For example, one such striking difference was the amount of time they were given to do their work as teacher educators. The relatively open schedule of hours to practice teacher education, the pacing of the work, and the unusual number of quiet moments played a major role in distinguishing university culture from K-12 culture. Time means opportunities for reflection that are rarely experienced by teachers in school classrooms., especially in a climate in which public school teachers find themselves increasingly burdened by new demands on their time from a movement towards bureaucratization, accountability, and control (Apple, 1993). Early on, Karl noted the difference between the type of reflection afforded to K-12 teachers and the type he now experienced as a university teacher educator. Although he "reflected" in both arenas, the local connotations of the term were distinct: "[university based reflection is] a kind of reflection that I probably would not have otherwise engaged in. I did engage in some of this kind of reflection as a teacher, but it was very informally in my conversations with colleagues and people who I respected, whose company I enjoyed, but it wasn't with a specific end in mind, an objective in mind" (interview, 11/3/99). A few months later into his university program, Karl amends this statement and says, "I had no real reflective time as a teacher" (interview, 1/21/00). Karl connects his time to reflect to a larger reality of more flexibility in the university context. Quoting one of his student teachers, he said, "There's no time to think when you're a high school teacher, and I don't think that is an accident" (interview, 5/25/00).

Going further, even this one aspect of the new world of teacher education— increased time for reflection— was not easily embraced in a straight-forward manner in this year of transition. Jason's newly acquired control over his own work life led to varying degrees of shame and confusion. He struggled with the feeling of "leaving behind" his teaching colleagues who did not have the luxury of time for reflection he was permitted as a teacher educator. These feelings of

guilt caused recurrent questioning about his teaching identity through the term. This one aspect of institutional context highlights the complexity of finding one's place in the new world of teacher education. Continued attempts to theorize the development of teacher educator identities will need to honor the complex and variable manner that characterizes the process.

Another feature of the institutional context was the nagging concern of justifying, to one's self and to others, larger questions of why the world of classroom teaching was left behind for that of teacher education. The need to justify this move, in part, was fueled by the normative aura surrounding the work of classroom teachers. As classroom teachers, Jason and Karl were motivated by the idea that teachers "make a difference" and serve noble ends of productive social change. In the world of the university, they wanted to pass on this same ethical foundation to the beginning teachers with whom they worked. As they developed their beliefs and practices as teacher educators, they found the institutional and cultural disjuncture between K-12 teaching and university teaching repeatedly causing them to ask the question, at some point, and in some way—*Well, then why did you leave?*

Institutional supports at a research university

This research draws attention to the institutional supports in place that facilitate one's move from teacher to teacher educator. In this case, Karl and Jason's experiences were mediated by the teacher education climate present in the university program in which they worked and learned. Their roles as teacher educators were shaped in a School of Education that sent mixed messages. On the one hand, there were numerous supports provided by the university that helped Karl and Jason develop their identities as teacher educators. On the other hand, they both perceived clear messages that ground-level practice in teacher education is little valued in an institution whose national reputation rests on researching and publishing. The process of developing a sense of professional practice required them to construct meaning in an environment that simultaneously valued and devalued their work as teacher educators.

The supports can include formalized aspects of the graduate school curriculum (e.g. coursework, colloquia, participation in research projects), systematic attention to helping new teacher educators learn their new positions (e.g. orientations, periodic meetings of teacher educators, mentoring), and less structured opportunities to collaborate with others about the

work of teacher education. Yet conflicting messages about what is valued in academia, for Jason and Karl, were part of the mix as well. The ways they utilized these formal support structures, at the same time that they internalized the predominant value structure of the university culture, was a prominent feature of their efforts to move from classroom teacher to teacher educator.

Despite these limitations, Jason and Karl also saw opportunities for development as teacher educators within the university context. One was the opportunity to actually teach beginning teachers, an opportunity made possible by the fact that many professors' research takes them out of the classroom-- the resulting void meant graduate students were needed to teach courses. Teaching the weekly seminar became a source of inspiration for Jason as he saw it as an opportunity to "DO teacher education as well and at the same time, where I can have an effect on people's lives, and they can help make my life more meaningful as well" (journal, 4/18/00). He also came to realize that "teaching at a college can be as magical as teaching in a high school" (4/11/00).

In theorizing institutional supports, it is instructive to look at one aspect of their first year as teacher educators that both claimed was a major influence in shaping their emerging professional identities-- their participation in the interview/research process of this study. Their roles as co-researchers with Todd provided both a *de facto* mentoring relationship that filled an institutional gap, and supplied them with the type of guided, sustained reflection that was not a structured part of their program. Throughout the year, Karl referred to this research relationship, saying it was "most influential in saving me a lot of casting about in the dark...a kind of reflection that I probably would not have otherwise engaged in" (interview, 11/3/99). He also claimed it was a process through which he could further shape his teacher education philosophy. Karl also stressed the value of the extended and sustained nature of the relationship, calling it an "ongoing conversation" that has been "hugely collaborative" (interview, 5/25/00). Likewise, Jason also referred to the research relationship as a major source of support. Jason said that the research process—the interviews and the journal writing—"get me thinking more than I probably would have otherwise" and was an opportunity to "collaborate" in a way that was "doing some of what should be going on on a broader scale" (interview, 5/11/00). For those interested in thinking about ways this theoretical sketch might suggest ideas about supporting new teacher

educators in their development, the power of collaborative, self-study research methods is an important finding.

Institutional expectations at a research university

Institutional expectations mark another realm of concerns experienced by those who navigate the transition from teacher to teacher educator. The written "job requirements" of a new teacher educator doing Field Instruction—the site visits, the weekly seminars, the observation reports—are certainly not the only tasks new teacher educators must take on. There is a also a world of unstated, though no less influential,, expectations stemming from the institutional and cultural context of any university/college. In the case of this university, for example, Jason was advised by a senior professor not to work with student teachers because he was "here to learn teacher ed and not do teacher ed" (interview, 1/10/00). As well, Jason learned of the expectations inherent to the role played by teacher educators who worked "in the trenches" of direct, field-based supervision, "Those who told me that the work can subsume your life were partly right ... The work is more emotionally demanding than a research project, and probably more time intensive that your average quarter-time graduate research appointment" (journal, 4/18/00). Such institutional and cultural expectations, both stated and unstated, are prominent features of the process of induction into the work of teacher education.

In Jason and Karl's cases, a powerful theme relating to institutional expectations in this particular setting was the (benign?) neglect they felt as they developed their emerging practices. Though there were forms of support available to them, they found that much of their activity as teacher educators took place below the radar of systematic oversight. There were no formal mechanisms in place to check the quality of their day-to-day decision-making in working with beginning teachers. Tenure-track faculty did not ask to see the syllabi Jason and Karl constructed for their seminars, nor did tenure-track faculty show interest in the approaches Jason and Karl brought to conducting field observations. In short, the operated as teacher educators in a realm of relative invisibility. The autonomy this afforded was mostly welcomed, but the free-hand they were given to construct their own ideas of best practice also spoke to expectations the institution had about the value of their work, the nature of work in teacher education practice, and the epistemology of developing knowledge about how beginning teachers are best supported in

developing their professional selves. Here too, the mixed-messages such institutional neglect sent highlight the complex, variable process that one goes through in making the transition from teacher to teacher educator.

Frames of knowledge and understanding

As a category in this theoretical sketch, frames of knowledge and understanding refers to the source, nature, and development of an epistemology of practice. Since the work of teacher education differs from the work of classroom teaching, it is reasonable to believe that the clusters of meaning that operate to support the decision-making of practitioners in each field are, at some point, divergent. Yet, conceptualizing what teachers and teacher educators know quickly leads one into murky and contested areas of debate encompassing varied research traditions, and numerous, differing propositional and practical accounts of knowledge generation about a "knowledge base" for teaching (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). For the purposes of this research something of an end-run was done around much of this debate as the focus on the empirical investigation was driven by two fairly straight-forward questions. First, we sought to determine where Jason and Karl looked for answers to the challenges they encountered in their new roles as teacher educators. Did they see teacher education as the mere application of knowledge about teaching, albeit in a different context, or did they consider a knowledge base of teacher education? Second, we examined how, if at all, they came to gain expertise and beliefs about teacher education. What was the process of developing knowledge about the practice of teacher education? Framed by these questions, the resulting theoretical sketch expands the category of frames of knowledge and understanding across four distinct concerns: searching for credibility, knowledge from former classroom lives, new bodies of understanding, and knowledge from doing and reflecting.

Searching for credibility

If the experiences of Jason and Karl hold for others in similar situations, the process of developing knowledge among those new to teacher education in university settings is facilitated by a search for credibility. Initially, knowledge of how to act as a teacher educator was drawn directly from Jason and Karl's experiences as classroom teachers. This is to be expected. From

where else would such knowledge have come, since they had no experience in, or formal study of, teacher education? This first induction into the new world of teacher education put survival and professional credibility at the forefront of their minds. Those who make abrupt transitions from teacher to teacher educator are likely to find themselves in positions where they must "prove themselves" as credible practitioners to their students, colleagues, school people, and, importantly, themselves. Jason pointed out that "teachers are skeptics" (journal, 3/30/00) who must be convinced that the ivy-tower university "talking head" (journal, 2/8/00) has something worth communicating. To some extent, length of service in classrooms bought trustworthiness across these different communities, and Karl and Jason worried that the lack of ongoing experience with school-aged students would compromise their ability to give good advice to student teachers.

In this initial year, the knowledge that bought them credibility was drawn from their work as teachers, and this remained a fairly consistent dynamic across the entire year of study. Neither ever once suggested that it was their *teacher education* experience that would give them credibility or provide them with knowledge more useful than that gained in the secondary school classroom. Yet there were moments, few in number (yet significant nonetheless), in which they realized that credibility in teacher education required more than a certain number of years spent in the classroom. The nature of the work as teacher educators sometimes sparked an awareness of moments marked by gaps between what they felt they needed to know and what they knew from the classroom. These gaps led to a both a crisis in confidence and a mindfulness about those activities particular to the work of preparing teachers that set teacher education apart from classroom teaching. In these gaps, the search for credibility led to the generation of knowledge about teacher education.

Knowledge from former (classroom) lives

It stands to reason that those who enter teacher education from stints as classroom teachers would draw heavily on their school experiences in making decisions about practice in their new roles. After all, teacher education is largely about preparing new teachers to enter the world these teacher educators very recently left behind. As well, experience teaching in secondary classrooms is often a condition for employment as teacher educators. There is little surprise then

in learning that Karl and Jason named their former classroom lives as the source for most of the knowledge they drew upon in their new roles as teacher educators, and there was stability in this finding across the entire year. Karl was quite clear that his instructional decision-making was a process that had him "drawing more than anything else on my experiences as a high school teacher" (interview, 5/25/00). Similarly, Jason posed the question, "When I make decisions as a teacher educator, on what basis or store of knowledge am I deciding? It's common sense derived from what I know about teachers and school and classroom realities *from teaching*" (journal, 3/16/00; emphasis in original). As part of broader theoretical sketch, prior experience becomes a prominent feature in understanding what happens when classroom teachers assume roles as university-based teacher educators.

Though prior knowledge from classroom teaching experience appears to be a powerful wellspring of knowledge about the work of teacher education, this research suggests that the ways in which this knowledge is applied in working with beginning teachers is something other than a simple application. As previously noted, new teacher educators encounter puzzling moments of practice for which prior experience leaves them short of answers. In such cases, application of prior knowledge means filtering such knowledge through new lenses of context and purpose. The synthesis of what we know from work as classroom teachers and what we need to know to do what is required in working with beginning teachers is a complex and variable process that generates new knowledge.

Another complicating dynamic at play in looking at the role of prior classroom-based knowledge is the potentially false sense of expertise that is engendered by the relative independence teacher educators experience in carrying out their work. That is, in the absence of dialogue about the nature of practice in teacher education, it is easy for beginning teacher educators to acquire self-confidence that what they knew as teachers is an adequate basis for what they need to know as teacher educators. When there is no challenge to consider the foundations of practice, teacher educators may slip comfortably into the habit of drawing on their own classroom teaching experiences. Here the risk is complacency, a reification of beliefs about teaching, and failure to view teacher education itself as a site wherein an expanded knowledge base might be constructed.

New bodies of expertise

One source of expertise that appeared to have only a minor influence in shaping how Jason and Karl formed their notions of best practice in teacher education is the very source that is presumably designed to have a significant effect—formal coursework in teacher education. If their experiences are indicative, new teacher educators probably do not look to an established body of accumulated propositional, or research-based knowledge on the practice of teacher education to find their ways in their new positions. Both Jason and Karl expressed skepticism that their coursework was supporting and informing their work as teacher educators. In Karl's case, this should come as no great surprise, since, as mentioned earlier, he came to this School of Education as a Masters student in Educational Foundations and Policy. On the other hand, Jason enrolled, and took courses, in the doctoral program in Teacher Education.

In general, particularly in the early days of their teacher-educating experience, Karl and Jason found little connection between their graduate courses and their newfound work. Like many successful classroom teachers, they relied upon their own intuitions, biographies, and experiences. For his part, Karl found an important resource in conversations with colleagues, two in particular: a fellow teacher educator with a year's experience, and Todd, who organized this study (interview, 11/3/99). Karl mentioned nothing about teacher education literature or university coursework, however, until later in his first year. Karl concluded that his coursework "won't fill the void, but it'll put some dirt in the bottom of the ditch" (interview, 5/25/00). Jason suggested that "a solid 15%" of his knowledge base came from his conversations with Todd and course readings (interview, 5/11/00).

Of course, accurately accounting for the basis of one's decision-making is a speculative endeavor at best. It is entirely possible that beginning teachers are influenced by what they encounter in their formal course of educational study in ways that are not always clear, or in ways that are hard to articulate. Complicating matters further is what little is known about how knowledge generates over time. In this case, how influential will the "dirt in the bottom of the ditch" prove as teacher educators continue to develop their professional expertise across the span of their careers? Though the answer to this question remains unknown, Karl and Jason's

experience was that their encounters with a formal knowledge base on teacher education played only a minor role in facilitating their transition from teacher to teacher educator.

Knowledge from doing and reflecting

So far, this theoretical sketch has located the frames of knowledge and understanding used by beginning teacher educators in their search for confidence, what they learned as classroom teachers, and only minimally in a formalized declarative body of research-based knowledge. The final piece of this puzzle lies in the knowledge derived from doing and reflecting on practice in teacher education. Karl and Jason's experiences point to the value of what might be conceptualized as an epistemology of practice. This finding is consistent with recent arguments for the ways in which the knowledge base of teaching is best conceptualized as highly situational, richly contextualized, and frequently particularistic (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). In their cases, Karl and Jason came to develop knowledge and understanding about teacher education primarily via a process of passing what they knew as classroom teachers through a filter of new experience and reflection. The emphasis in this model is on the wedding of experience *and* reflection. While experience alone was a crucial part of the story of their first year as teacher educators (see The Practice Arena section), it was the reflection on key experiences that transformed their initial understandings into situationally appropriate knowledge. As Eraut (1994) explains, the contextual dependency of professional knowledge creates the conditions that allow opportunities to generate theory-in-action. The results are rich additions to the frames of knowledge and understanding of professional practice.

The Practice Arena

The final major category of this model of teachers becoming teacher educators runs through all other categories and stands apart at the same time. Jason and Karl found numerous catalysts for growth in their early experiences as teacher educators: their evolving professional biographies; the support and competing priorities of the university; the structures of knowledge they developed over the course of their first year teaching teachers. The confluence of all these elements occurred within the four walls of the classrooms where they taught their weekly return-to-campus seminars, in the one-on-one observational sessions with student teachers in the field,

and in the numerous informal encounters they had with their students. It was in practice that Jason and Karl had to meet the challenges of this transition head-on, and it was there that the parameters of these trials were made clear. In a sense, as with all teachers, the proof of their development as teacher educators was to be found not in preparation, nor in conversations, nor in reconsideration: it was in the classroom. Here, Karl and Jason identified, strategized, and acted.

Theorizing the move from teacher to teacher educator demands that attention be paid to practice as a conceptual category unto itself. As with practicing teachers, new teacher educators find some of the most powerful catalysts for development in their interactions with future teachers. As recounted under Frames of Knowledge, much of this progress occurs via a process of reflection. However in many instances, practice moves forward in jumps as specific challenges are addressed in real time. The parallels to teaching are clear-- it is the crucible of the classroom that compels new practitioners to hone their practice. For the duration of their time spent as teacher educators, Karl and Jason encountered numerous problems that challenged them to frequently reconsider what it meant to assume their new identities as teacher educators. The important role played by these puzzling moments, borne as they were of direct experience, is an argument for setting them apart and highlighting their contribution to the story of teachers becoming teacher educators. The arena of practice offers numerous rich themes and touchstones regarding the transition from teaching to educating teachers. Among the most powerful of these are: (1) Felt needs/challenges of practice (2) Levels of advocacy (3) Teacher educators as models.

Felt needs/challenges of practice

Reflection on the work of teacher education takes place on multiple levels. There are those times when we stand back to consider teacher education as an abstraction. On another level, experience is framed and interpreted in response to the immediate challenges of the moment. "Felt needs" derived from ground-floor experiences in teaching beginning teachers are influential in shaping the process of their induction to teacher education. Early on, Jason listened to his students, and identified strongly with their expressed need to be in secondary school classrooms, to see the practical application of pedagogy. He returned repeatedly to the importance of the challenges he met as a new teacher educator in identifying with the puzzles and doubts of the

student teachers in his charge. For his part, Karl observed that "you have to be in there first and you have to be doing it for awhile before you realize how useful something is going to be" (interview, 9/9/99). Karl and Jason both understood that the act of teaching is a crucial part of learning to teach. They knew that for their students, who were first learning to teach in secondary classrooms; and they knew that for themselves, as they adjusted to their new positions as teachers of teachers.

An example from Jason's experience helps illustrate the meaning of this category. Early on, Jason found he had to intervene assertively when a student teacher experienced conflict with his cooperating teacher. The immediacy of this beginning teacher's problem became a role-defining moment when Jason had to decide how to think about his student's perceived crisis, and even more so, when he had to decide how to act as a teacher educator. Jason articulated his need to believe in the student in order to properly represent his interests: "I had to believe in his ability in the same way a teacher needs to believe that 'all students can learn'" (journal, 1/27/00). In this instance, Jason addressed a felt need to deal with an unfamiliar problem by drawing upon a principle from his classroom days. Further defining this problem of practice as a defining teacher education moment was Jason's empathy for the complex situation of the cooperating teacher (a role he had filled himself while teaching high school), particularly in light of that teacher's students, who, Jason agreed, deserved the best education possible.

This case, and others like it, highlight the manner in which development as a teacher educator is facilitated by dealing with the day-to-day problems of practice. Indeed, such practical puzzles stand out as problems in large part because they are teacher education problems. For the ways in which these problematics of practice stand apart from those experienced while teaching in school classrooms, new teacher educators are put in a position from positions that are new to them. In working through these "felt needs," they are also working through the transition from teacher to teacher educator.

Levels of advocacy

The question of advocacy appears as an important theme in beginning teacher educators' navigation of their new educational worlds of practice. One aspect of attempts to figure out what it means to think and act as teacher educators is sorting out different obligations to multiple

communities of participants in teacher education settings, including student teachers, student teachers' students, cooperating teachers, fellow teacher educators, and themselves. Beginning teacher educators have to answer a question that takes on new meanings in the university setting—who am I here for? Going further, settling the matter of whom they were there for is only a small part of the advocacy problem. Larger issues pertain to deciding what actions are called for in advocating for a particular party, and what actions are appropriate when the apparent needs of different parties conflict. In contrast, as classroom teachers, the question of advocacy appear far more settled, since, for the most part, most teachers mainly deal with the students before them in their classrooms. As teacher educators, though, practice takes on greater complexity.

Both Karl and Jason saw themselves from the beginning of their experiences as advocates for their student teachers: as defenders, protectors, and confidantes. "I'm here," asserted Jason, "to make sense out of the experience they're about to have" (interview, 1/10/00). Adding the cooperating teacher into the mix, Karl expressed his objectives thus: "We're both there to facilitate growth on the part of the student teacher" (interview, 11/3/99). Their initial concern for their student teachers is understandable for the ways in which it paralleled their concern for their own students the year before when they still were classroom teachers.

Returning to Jason's incident outlined in the previous section is helpful here. To recall, Jason felt some solidarity with the cooperating teacher, as another member of the larger teaching community. His identification with a practicing classroom teacher posed a problem of practice, the resolution of which gave him a clearer sense of what it means to be a teacher educator. In the end, Jason sought to "take sides" with his student teacher in this conflict, but he was well aware of the complexity involved in doing so. He noted, "Like me, the cooperating teachers seem to be caught between the role of advocating for their students, and advocating for that end of things, and advocating for their student teachers. Some of them are very protective of the students and are more critical in looking at what the students are getting, rather than the student teacher, and they try to walk that line as well" (interview, 4/3/00).

Of course, defining one's role as an advocate for student teachers, and knowing *how* to act in their best interests, are two different things. An important question facing all teacher

educators, but especially the novice, is what actions are in the best interests of their student teachers, each of whom are beginning educators who themselves must answer to multiple participants in sometimes stressful and unfamiliar learning environments. The various kinds of obligation to different communities poses special challenges to new teacher educators. In Karl and Jason's case, acting for their student teachers also involved an awareness of an underlying sense of advocacy for the student teachers' *students*. As Jason commented, working with beginning teachers "had both an immediate and long-term impact on not only the student teacher, but all of their future students." (interview, 5/11/00). With at least part of their focus returning to a focus on how teachers can "make a difference," the process of sorting new advocacy concerns, for Jason and Karl, involved not losing sight of who was ultimately at the receiving end of schooling. Forging a new identity as a teacher educator did not mean they forgot about what drew them to the profession of teaching in the first place.

Teacher educators as models

In this theoretical sketch, modeling is the third major theme related to the practice arena. Karl and Jason's experiences suggest that, for various reasons, beginning teacher educators may experience a deep interest in making sure their pedagogy as teacher educators matches the ideas of best practice they hope to develop in their student teachers. Loughran (1996) points out, the induction period in teacher education offers opportunities for emergent professionals to become keenly aware of the educative power they possess via their actions as teacher educators. Such a concern is a departure from former days as classroom teachers in that, at the university, the subject area of instruction is no longer just social studies or English, for example, though to some extent it is still that too. In the new world of teacher education, what they are teaching is, essentially, teaching itself. For those beginning teacher educators who approach their initial professional development reflectively, as Karl and Jason did, this charge to "teach teaching" can lead to self-reflexivity about the extent to which they send the message to "do as I do." As Jason explained, "I don't know how to help them become really good in the classroom without modeling for them in seminar and sharing with them ideas from my folders" (interview, 4/3/00). Similarly, Karl noted, "It drives me crazy when people employ poor educational practices to try to communicate what good educational practices are" (interview, 9/9/99). For Karl, this would

become a powerful and durable priority: to practice *with* his student teachers what he preached *to* his student teachers. He pointed out that he was "very conscious of trying to be consistent with the principle that I'm teaching" (interview, 5/25/00).

In this research, the place of modeling in the practice arena was marked by two distinct purposes it served. First, modeling was a powerful tool in working through the practical dilemmas felt by Jason and Karl as they struggled to direct their student teachers along a constructivist path of learning to teach. Such dilemmas were rooted in unresolved questions Karl and Jason had about balancing direct and indirect approaches to working with students. At times they felt the need to directly assert their own "knowledge of experience" acquired through their years as classroom teachers. At the same time, they also wanted to provide the intellectual and emotional space for their students to work out their own understandings about teaching. Modeling helped resolve this tension. Second, returning to the earlier theme of "searching for credibility," modeling served a second function beyond the immediate concerns of instruction. It bought legitimacy across two different role positions. The transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator requires substantiating credibility as accomplished classroom teachers and as teacher educators. Modeling works both ways. In this capacity, modeling can be a prominent feature of the ways new teacher educators think about their emerging identities.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

These central categories and their associated sub-themes mark out conceptual space that serves as a starting point in building theory to explain this crucial phase in the development of teacher education competence. Of course, these categories were derived from the experiences of only two new teacher educators, each of whom brought to the study their own particular beliefs and biographies, and each of whom negotiated this transition in a unique context. Throughout the paper, this emerging theory has been referred to as only a sketch, and it bears emphasizing the limited scope of ambitions framing the research. Clearly, the process of leaving the school classroom behind and assuming one's place in the world of teacher education is enormously variable and complex. Despite the best of intentions, the prospects that a single theoretical framework could fully account for this complexity are meager at best. Furthermore, this work

was approached with a full awareness that theoretical models that attempt to categorize social phenomena run the risk of being reductive and restrictive. Such theories are helpful for the ways they help us see, but they are perhaps just as dangerous for what they encourage us to overlook. With these caveats in mind, the categories explained here are cautiously offered as a beginning, tentative, and rough theoretical map that could guide further research and programmatic efforts in teacher education. In this sense this theory is offered as a question to spark further discussion as much as it is offered as an answer to the problem that drove the inquiry-- how teachers become teacher educators.

The educational importance of this study resides in a two-fold contribution to our underdeveloped conceptualization of, and knowledge about, the professional development of teacher educators. The results suggest possible directions for 1) attempts to construct theory about the initial development of teacher educators, and for 2) thinking about possible approaches to support those who make the immediate transition from teacher to teacher educator.

Simply put, there has not been a lot of research, either of theoretical or empirical bent, published that deals with the manner in which teacher educators develop their competence as practitioners. Some work has addressed the experiences of new teacher education faculty (Guilfoyle, et. al., 1995, Pinnegar, 1995), and other research examines the issue of teacher education from the perspective of more experienced teacher educators (Zeichner, 1995, Clandinin, 1995). However, there has been a notable lack of attempts to build on the limited work done on this issue. As with the professional socialization of teachers (Zeichner and Gore, 1990), it is reasonable to believe that the initial experience of doing teacher education is a powerful force in shaping the professional practice of teacher educators over the span of their careers. Assuming teacher educators have some role to play in the development of effective teachers, understanding more about how they experience their entrée into the profession is an important part of the growing educational reform literature. For this reason, the categories offered in this theoretical sketch stand as an invitation to others to consider their own experiences with teacher education induction, a heuristic enabling at least one systematic approach to the question of shifting identifies.

Another benefit of this research is the manner in which it sensitizes the teacher education research community to the ways that new teacher educators are or are not supported in making the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator. The problematics identified give cause for consideration of how induction to the field takes place. For example, the value Karl and Jason placed on opportunities for authentic reflection challenges education schools that rely on graduate students to run their teacher education programs to reconsider the degree to which they encourage meaningful reflection about the work of teacher education. This research suggests that the absence of meaningful mentoring and reflection in education schools may inadvertently facilitate mediocrity in teacher education, teaching, and ultimately in the quality of education students receive.

Finally, returning to the limitations and risks involved in putting forward a theory of such a complex phenomenon, this research is valuable in highlighting what it fails to address, namely, the question of competence in teacher education. From the empirical investigation of Jason and Karl's first years as teacher educators, we develop a sense of the themes and concerns that were important to them as they struggled to forge new identities as teacher educators. Important as this contribution is, the work says nothing about the *quality* of their work as teacher educators. And ultimately, the practical aim of research in teacher education is to improve the quality of practice. What is needed then is not just better theorizing about teachers becoming teacher educators, but a marriage of such thinking to a (hopelessly?) normative conceptualization of good teacher education. To say this complicates matter is complicated is as big an understatement as there are. The theory sketched here renders the simple model of "you learn about teacher education, and then you go out and do it" wishful thinking. What Munby, Russell, and Martin (2001) suggest is true about teacher knowledge and its development seems no less true for teacher education knowledge and its development, "What is at first disarmingly simple turns out to be endlessly complex with many conceptions, many researchers, many viewpoints, and many epistemological and moral issues each vying for our attention" (p. 900) The response to such complexity need not be retreat, but some humility is probably required. This work towards a theory of teachers becoming teacher educators is a humble contribution to encourage

more thinking about teacher educator professional development, and the knowledge driving practice in teacher education.

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